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**British Ceramics Biennial is back!**

**International ceramics festival returns to Stoke-on-Trent for 7th edition**

The British Ceramics Biennial returns to Stoke-on-Trent (11 September to 17 October), with a vibrant five-week festival of new artist commissions, exhibitions and hands-on events that celebrate the life, character and creativity that ceramics bring to the city.

The Goods Yard, a 19th century former warehouse in the heart of Stoke Town, will be transformed and animated by the UK’s leading ceramic artists and emerging talents, many of them taking inspiration from the city’s industrial heritage and transforming tradition in a contemporary way. For the first time BCB will also curate an online programme of films, tours and events for those unable to visit in person. Festival highlights include:

* BCB’s headline exhibition **AWARD** – taking centre stage in the festival, this snapshot of the contemporary ceramics scene sees 10 of the UK’s most innovative ceramic artists competing for a £5,000 prize.
* **Stoke Makes Plates** – a large-scale installation of 250 plates designed by 120 Stoke-on-Trent residents – from care home residents to people in addiction recovery – commissioned artists and local ceramics manufacturers and inspired by Stoke's historic high-street.
* **History at the Dinner Table** – US-based writer and artist **Jacqueline Bishop** reinterprets the brightly coloured bone china decorative plates used symbolically in Caribbean homes and delves into how they hid a violent history of slavery and colonialism by European countries.
* New commission from **Vicky Lindo** and **Bill Brookes** exploring the menstrual cycle and culminating in two large-scale lioness figures accompanied by other pots and vessels.
* Major exhibitions in the city’s cultural quarter of Hanley including **Neil Brownsword’s** solo show at the **Potteries Museum & Art Gallery**, which delves into North Staffordshire’s early ceramic industrialisation, and an exhibition at **Airspace Gallery** exploring clay’s zeitgeist moment.
* **Paul Scott’s** new *Cumbrian Blue(s)* tea set made by Spode for Fortnum & Mason
* Interventions in Swift House inspired by the **Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion** and led by local young people in collaboration with V&A Wedgwood Collection
* Hands-on programme in BCB’s science lab inspiring visitors to get involved by making and playing with clay – from exploring traditional techniques to experimenting with contemporary processes

Iain Cartwright, Executive Director of the British Ceramics Biennial comments: ‘*We’re really excited to be back with such a vibrant festival programme. As well as bringing life back to the city, the festival will be a chance to show how contemporary artists are using clay to create very contemporary, thought-provoking and often politically charged work, many of them taking inspiration from Stoke-on-Trent’s extraordinary industrial heritage. This year’s festival is about supporting the artists and communities we work with and welcoming visitors back to the city.’*

### The Goods Yard is the focal point of the festival, with **AWARD** and **Fresh** - which brings together 25 early career ceramic artists – taking centre stage. A new body of work exploring the subject of menstruation created by 2019 AWARD winners **Vicky Lindo** and **Bill Brookes** will sit alongside works created through industry residencies in the city by 2019 Fresh Talent winners **Alice Walton, Toni de Jesus, Pam Su** and **Laura Plant**.

### Elsewhere in the space will be a piece by **Sarah Fraser** looking at the use of clay in the built environment and festival collaborations including **Tana West’s** 3m ceramic panorama of St Austell clay county in partnership with the Whitegold Festival; a display of the four commissions from the Leach Pottery’s **Leach 100**; and a design for a Fern Brick for growing shade-loving plants in Portland Street created by BCB artists Joanne Mills and Sarah Fraser in collaboration with Portland Inn artist Anna Francis.

BCB’s international work with the **Indian Ceramics Triennale** and **Kasama Potters** will be celebrated through a showcase of clay work by two early career potters from **Gundaiyali**, a village in India known for its traditional craft practices, and an exchange of ideas and culture between Stoke-on-Trent and Kasama, Japan.

At the nearby Spode Works site **Paul Scott’s *Gardens of Lyra*** in The Spode Museum Trust & Heritage Centre celebrates a new *Cumbrian Blue(s)*tea set, made by Spode for Fortnum & Mason. The festival will also spill over into the Spode Rose Garden with Stoke-on-Tent artist **Louise Adams** capturing the seasonality of the garden through drawing and painting. The Spode Works site will be filled with installations and creative responses, including photography with collective **Haptic Tacit**, and public realm seating with Stoke-based **Dust Rising**.

A vibrant, hands-on programme of activities will run throughout the festival – from plate-making to science experiments - encouraging people of all ages to be inspired to create ceramics for themselves. The launch weekend (11 and 12 September) will bring together a programme of celebratory activities for all ages.

The seventh edition of the BCB festival is in Stoke-on-Trent from 11 September to 17 October 2021. The festival is underpinned by a year-round programme of artists’ commissions, education and community engagement projects throughout the city.

[www.britishceramicsbiennial.com](http://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com)

**-Ends-**

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**Notes to editors**

**About the** **British Ceramics Biennial:**

The British Ceramics Biennial festival takes places from 11 September to 17 October 2021.

The British Ceramics Biennial (BCB) is a prestigious and high-profile festival of contemporary ceramics that takes place in Stoke-on-Trent. BCB presents artworks from the UK’s leading ceramicists alongside work by international artists, in exhibitions and special events held across the city. BCB is underpinned by an exciting year-round programme of artists’ commissions, education and community engagement projects.

British Ceramics Biennial is a prestigious project that embraces the heritage of the Potteries as the home of British ceramics; that stimulates creativity and innovation across the breadth of its practice and sharpens Stoke-on-Trent’s creative edge as an international centre for excellence in contemporary ceramics.

Initiated in 2009, BCB has grown to be the single largest ceramics event in the UK, a flagship cultural project for Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and a catalyst for regeneration. BCB has been successful in bringing great art, creative energy and critical attention to the city, and has facilitated meaningful new public engagement with local communities, visitors and cultural tourists.

**British Ceramics Biennial funders:**

The British Ceramics Biennial is funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

